

**RHODE ISLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**MEETING OF THE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**PUBLIC SESSION**

**October 7, 2008**

The Rhode Island Science & Technology Advisory Council (“STAC”) met on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 in Public Session at the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Providence, Rhode Island pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Dr. Peter Alfonso, Dr. Clyde Briant (Co-Chair), Ms. Kimball Hall, Dr. David Hibbitt, Mr. Saul Kaplan, Dr. Thomas Rockett, Dr. Jeffrey Seemann (Co-Chair), Dr. Donald Stanford

Members absent were Dr. Arthur Klein, Dr. Margaret Leinen, Dr. Richard Nadolink and Mr. Thomas Ryan.

Also present were Lt. Governor Roberts, Majority Leader Fox and Senator Walaska and RIEDC’s staff. Drs. Briant and Seemann presided over the meeting.

**Welcome**

Dr. Briant called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. He then welcomed URI Commission chair Robert Flanders who would deliver the group’s final report and recommendations. He also recognized Commissioners who were present: Peter Alfonso, Constance Howes, David Hibbitt and Saul Kaplan and stated that Alec Broers, James Coleman and Margaret Leinen were unable to travel to Rhode Island to join us. On behalf of the Council, he thanked each Commissioner for the thoughtful guidance they gave to this project. Dr. Seemann joined Dr. Briant in extending gratitude.

**Approval of Minutes**

Citing no changes, upon a motion duly made by Dr. Rockett and seconded by Ms. Hall the minutes of the May 1, 2008 STAC meeting were accepted.

**Rhode Island Research Alliance**

Dr. Briant introduced the next order of business which pertained to a summary of the Rhode Island Research Alliance program. Strengthening RI’s collaborative research platform is a huge priority for STAC. As one of its first initiatives, the Council formed

the RI Research Alliance and launched the Collaborative Grant Award program to stimulate cutting-edge catalytic, collaborative research projects across the state's academic and commercial research. To date, this program has provided funding to 17 research teams representing 55 investigators from 24 Rhode Island institutions. Interest in this program has been strong: in two years, nearly 100 proposals have been submitted totaling \$15 million in funding requests.

Dr. Briant noted that the 2009 request for proposals was recently issued and that STAC is thankful for continued funding for this effort and the support of state leadership. The current difficult financial environment only underscores the urgency of efforts like this which by facilitating cooperation and collaboration are critical to leveraging the state's resources to build a thriving research and development enterprise in the state that both brings additional funding into the state and products to market.

### **State EPSCoR Report**

Dr. Seemann then reported on RI EPSCoR activities. Established in February 2004, RI EPSCoR has two stated goals that guide its activities: 1) Attain national prominence and competitive research excellence in the life sciences and 2) Foster and support the synergistic integration of research, education, innovation and communication to build a strong statewide network. Over the past three years, the federal award has brought \$6.75 million to RI researchers for the establishment of core facilities and development of human capital through student training and outreach. RI's activities focus in the areas of proteomics, genomics and marine life sciences. RI is currently applying for a five-year \$20 million renewal of EPSCoR status. The renewal grant will build on the successes of the first grant and includes every one of Rhode Island's eleven institutions of higher education as full partners as well as new institutional partners such as the hospitals, the Slater Technology Fund and state agencies. It will bring the state into the worlds of next generation DNA sequencing and research on the design of new media technologies for the dissemination of science to the public, to name just two of a number of important emphases. It will continue the state's outstanding human capital development and entrepreneurship programs and initiate new programs in bioengineering and science policy. The grant was developed with community involvement and will be submitted on October 21, 2008.

### **URI Commission for Research and Innovation**

Dr. Briant introduced Hon. Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Chair of the URI Commission for Research and Innovation to present the Commission's final report. He was joined via telephone by Christine Heenan, who with her team at Clarendon, led the research and analysis component. Ms. Heenan summarized the process her team used to gather and analyze data. Justice Flanders then noted that using this information, the Commission concluded that URI and state leadership must commit to making bold changes and creating the conditions necessary to significantly enhance research and innovation

capacity at URI. The Commission established three specific benchmarks for measuring URI's transformation:

- Achieve a "Research University/Very High Activity" designation from the Carnegie Foundation by 2015.
- Double total levels of research and development funding in the next five years, achieving total research funding of \$140 million annually by 2015.
- Achieve measurable economic impact in Rhode Island through the development of a technology-oriented workforce, technology transfer, and greater collaboration with industry.

To reach these benchmarks, the Commission identified the following three priority recommendations:

1. Attract a new President with demonstrated experience in building university-based research capacity, and who is capable of leading a transformative change effort at URI;
2. Create a sustainable financial model for URI that provides university leadership and the Board of Governors with the flexibility to make necessary investments in building research capacity;
3. Jump-start URI's research capacity with a \$100-million public investment through a bond initiative to capitalize the attraction of 20-30 world class research faculty, and to provide state matching funds to catalyze federal research grant procurement efforts.

Dr. Briant stated that to support implementation of these recommendations, STAC is partnering with the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education to actively advocate for these measures. Members of the implementation team include Commission members Coleman, Flanders, Hibbitt and Leinen, Kaplan as well as Commissioner for Higher Education Jack Warner.

Dr. Rockett requested that a member of the URI community be added to the implementation team to engage the university.

### **New Business**

There was no new business.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business in Public Session, upon a motion duly made by Mr. Kaplan and seconded by Dr. Seemann, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

---

Christine M.B. Smith  
Secretary

